

Essay Marking Samples

To what extent has your study of ideas and values in Literary Mindscapes enhanced your understanding of the relationship between being and yearning?

In your response, refer to TWO of your prescribed texts and at least ONE related text of your choosing.

To a significant extent, Literary Mindscapes effectively reveal that dissatisfactory states of being create yearning for alternative self-perceptions. Sophia Coppola's postmodern romance *Lost In Translation* (2003) and Emily Dickinson's existential poetry (1900s) unveil that this relationship positively impacts the individual since yearning can be satiated. However, Daniel Keyes' science fiction story *Flowers For Algernon* (1959) and Haruki Murakami's magical-realist novel *After Dark* (2004) offer another perspective into Literary Mindscapes by suggesting that individuals inevitably return to their fundamental state of being due to the incessant nature of desire. Unveiled by the psychological framework of Jacques Lacan, these explorations of mindscapes compellingly convey the inextricable relationship between negative states of being and yearning for an ideal identity.

In *Lost In Translation*, Coppola reveals that the desire for an ideal alternative way of being can be facilitated by sharing this pursuit with another individual. Her representation of Bob's doubt in being able to experience intimacy was highly influenced by the superficiality of her capitalist milieu, which can suffocate authentic connection. Initially, the close-up of Bob's morose facial expression as he gazes towards a billboard of himself elicits the false recognition of the Ego in Lacan's mirror stage, conveying his dislocated state of being from the inherently false nature of his capitalist world. This manufactures a disconnect with his wife, highlighted through static camera movement reinforcing his satirical dialogue, "Which one's burgundy?", producing Bob's yearning for authentic personal relationships that haven't been sterilised by capitalism. His connection with Charlotte at the bar marks the pursuit of this desire, whereby the foreground of their silhouettes against a blurred metropolitan background portrays their mutual emotional understanding as a catalyst for authentic relationships in their personal lives. This shift in their mindscapes is exhibited to resolve

Commented [JW1]: With these evaluative-type questions, you don't have to explicitly specify "To a great extent" or "to a partial extent" etc. Usually, wordspace in your thesis could be better allocated to just positing your argument – the evaluation should be inherent within this.

Commented [JW2]: Effective thesis statement 😊 Here, within your argument about Literary Mindscapes unveiling xyz, your evaluation is intrinsic. Evaluative adverbs can also be useful to get this point across – eg. Powerfully, subtly, evocatively, effectively (as you have here).

Commented [JW3]: Try further unpacking the "positive impact" signposted here. Is it formative for a more desirable identity?

Commented [JW4]: Novella

Commented [JW5]: Or perhaps even contrasting.

Commented [JW6]: The expression/logic here isn't totally clear. How does the incessant nature of desire create a return to a fundamental state of being? Perhaps you could clarify with wording – and acknowledge the cyclical/futile nature of desire.

Commented [JW7]: I think you could make more of this idea and even go as far to integrate it in your thesis. The notion that being and yearning are tightly interrelated – desire for transformation whether attainable or ephemeral are core elements of what enriches "being" itself – would help layer what you've already got.

Commented [JW8]: Try to further unpack broad "value" statements like this.

Commented [JW9]: A solid start! But consider refocussing your expression to communicate the notion that yearning for an alternative way of being may be actualised by connection with another person – rather than desire itself.

Commented [JW10]: Perhaps further clarify – intimacy of what kind? Many are explored through the film eg. emotional, intellectual, sexual.

Commented [JW11]: Some good links to context to begin! You could even extend this to discuss how human image has become a marketable commodity, in order to more thoroughly analyse the mechanisms of disconnection in a capitalist system. This would allow you to develop a more original argument.

Commented [JW12]: It would be pertinent to contextualise here how Bob's wife sends him a series of swatches, with the difference between shades barely discernible – to emphasise how the satire is operating.

Commented [JW13]: With each successive context link, try to go further in offering more specific/diverse det ... [1]

Deleted: an out-of-focus lifeless

Commented [JW14]: Or even symbolises, just to slip in that extra technique.

Deleted: s

Commented [JW15]: I think you could further analyse their emotional/intellectual and/or spiritual compatibility here, which is transcending structures of a capitalist ... [2]

their yearning for genuine intimacy through the salient centre framing of Bob's hand on Charlotte's foot as they lie in bed, conveying their attainment of alternative identities as individuals capable of experiencing raw emotions. Coppola's exploration of their mindscapes provokes audiences to consider the cataclysmic relationship between being and yearning in a positive light.

Commented [JW16]: Expression here is a little unclear – I think it stems from the part “exhibited to...”

Commented [JW17]: Try further unpacking this phrase, as with similar phrases I've highlighted in your intro. Always aim for specificity 😊

Deleted: drastically diverges by revealing

Commented [JW18]: Really strong argument, and clearly articulated. Well done!

In contrast, Keyes' *Flowers For Algernon* reveals that changes to an individual's state of being, incited by incessant yearning, are detrimental to their fundamental sense of self. Keyes' characterisation of Charlie as a dissatisfied mentally disabled outsider was shaped by ethos of the 1950s American Beat Generation which aimed to give voice to minority groups. The personification of Charlie's 'unconscious' and 'conscious' “two minds” that cause “crazy dreams” reflects Sigmund Freud's concept of latent content in dream analysis, explaining how Charlie's craving of a state of being where he has positive self-perception derives from repressed traumatic memories of ignominy in the id. Lacanian theory elaborates that these unconscious drives shape Charlie's pursuit of his objet petit a of social normalcy, whereby an intertextual simile to Douglas Hofstadter's non-fiction book ‘Gödel, Escher, Bach’ portrays it to be “like steps on a giant ladder” that can “opened new worlds”. However, the reference to Hofstadter's focus on the Epimenides paradox foreshadows Charlie's paradoxical transgression into a state of interpersonal disconnection, highlighted in the irony of feeling, “further away from Alice with an IQ of 185 as I was when I had an IQ of 70”. Thus, the metaphor of Charlie gazing at “endless corridors of myself” “in the mirror” emphasises the impossibility of truly achieving his ideal state of being by evoking dislocation from Lacan's mirror stage, parallel to Bob's alienation in *Lost In Translation* but implying negative self-perception by being at the end. Keyes provides an insightful perspective into the impractical connection between being and yearning by suggesting that the unquenchable nature of yearning prevents significant change in an one's fundamental identity.

Commented [JW19]: Really complex, nuanced entwining of theories here. Great work.

Deleted: being characterised by

Commented [JW20]: Excellent layering of your argument.

Commented [JW21]: Consider offering further details here to contextualise. Did this take place towards the end of the novella where he'd regressed?

Commented [JW22]: Initial state of alienation

Commented [JW23]: I think you could further nuance your end-point here. What you've argued is far more complex, suggesting that a constant state of yearning is detrimental to a pre-existing “essentialized” conception of identity.

Commented [JW24]: Just syntactically, try separating this link to LIT to another sentence for the sake of clarity. Your sentence is running a little overlong here, when you're making a really key link.

Commented [JW25]: What do you mean by this? Expression is a little unclear here.

Otherwise, you've set up a strong paragraph that has good synergy with LIT 😊

Commented [JW26]: With this linking phrase, you could afford to be even more explicit about which specific *Algernon* idea you're contrasting. As an example structure: Diverging from...Dickinson...

Commented [JW27]: Which poem will you be referring to in this paragraph?

Here, I also think you've strayed a little far from adhering closely to the terms of the question. Try ensuring that “being” and “yearning” and/or their variations appear in each and every topic and concluding sentence. Might seem a bit formulaic and laborious but will really go far in communicating the impression that you're thoroughly engaging.

On the other hand, Dickinson comments on the potential attainment of an individual's ideal state of being when a singular rational desire can prevail over the irrational unconscious. Dickinson's central paradox of longing to belong whilst experiencing

isolation stemmed from her own **spiritually independent mindscape** from the 19th century Puritan community. Dickinson initially **juxtaposes capitalised symbols of emotion and rationality** in having, “felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” to convey the dichotomous division of her unconscious self, implying that she cannot change her state of being until **one of these prevails**. Her metafictional personal “letter” to the capitalised “World” effectively emphasises one of these desires - her intense yearning to connect with humanity, which corresponds with Charlie’s primitive instinct for community in Sigmund **Freud’s id in *Flowers For Algernon***. However, Dickinson’s symbolic restraint in the capitalised biblical allusion of having “touched the Curious Wine” conveys a second desire, her Lacanian objet petit a of isolated **self-exploration**. A **paradox thus arises** in her prioritisation of the desire **for** self-exploration as portrayed in the parataxis, “Entering - takes away -”, elucidating Dickinson’s ultimate embrace of practical solitude that characterises her state of being despite her initial yearning to belong to Lacan’s cultural world. The ultimate triumph of one desire over the others invites audiences to consider how **this** facilitates the achievement of an ideal state of being.

Contrastingly, Murakami’s *After Dark* explores how desires stemming from the unconscious and dark facet of the psyche can impede the pursuit of alternative ways of being. Murakami’s portrait of collective self-search was tinted by the cosmopolitan confusion deriving from the neo-modern dislocation of social consciousness. Through an extended metaphor of night as the mind’s dark underbelly, the novel’s fixed “midnight” city setting which “swallows people” encapsulates how the existential dilemmas arising from urban ecology motivate the citizens to seek out a way of being where they are liberated from the grimness of their dark **unconscious psyche**. Self knowledge is portrayed as a tool to obtain this through Korogi’s personification, “I’m racing my own shadow”, directly eliciting Carl Jung’s repression of the Shadow that embodies negative identity traits. However, like Dickinson, Murakami reveals the paradox of the mind through the novel’s surrealist symbolism of Eri’s physical body “disintegrating”, conveying Jung’s idea that suppression of the Shadow paradoxically estranges individuals further from **self-knowledge**. The metaphorical denouement where consciousness and unconsciousness are “divided” and Takahashi questions

Commented [JW28]: Rather than threading the expression of “mindscape” in here, try prioritizing clarity of expression. Perhaps – spiritual *estrangement* from a 19th century Puritan community?

Commented [JW29]: Analysis here is a little unclear – could you further clarify why you’ve perceived them as “capitalised” here?

Commented [JW30]: One of which? Expression here is a little unclear.

Deleted: ,

Commented [JW31]: Strong, fluid link.

Commented [JW32]: Excellent progression in your argument here 😊

Commented [JW33]: The paradox here is a little unclear. It more simply reads like one desire is prevailing over another, and thus shaping her identity more dominantly.

Deleted: of

Commented [JW34]: What, specifically? An approach of self-exploration as removed from impulses towards social acceptance?

Overall, you’ve engaged this text in an interesting dialogue with *Algernon*. The arc of your thesis is progressing very fluidly, so well done here!

Commented [JW35]: Great analysis so far.

Commented [JW36]: Great point!

which one “contains his centre of gravity” thus reveals that the citizens’ unwillingness to fully embrace the dark, irrational side of the psyche obstructs the attainment of Lacan’s objet petit a of self-understanding. By doing so, Murakami provides insight into how individuals remain in a negative state of stasis in regards to their state of being when their desires cannot be reached.

The exploration of the inextricable relationship between being and yearning across diverse texts reveals how the pursuit of alternative ways of being universally moulds interior mindscapes. Lost In Translation and Dickinson’s poetry reveal that this connection has positive implications since yearning can be satiated. Flowers For Algernon and After Dark oppose this by unveiling the voracious appetite of desire, which obstructs pursuits of alternative identities. Ultimately, the representation of these interior worlds prompts audiences to reconsider their own personal values by providing insight into how an individual’s state of being and principal desire simultaneously influence each other.

Commented [JW37]: This paragraph is shaping up very well, but to further layer your argument here, consider how you might also link to the earlier texts of your essay (LIT and Algernon) rather than just Dickinson which you just explored in the previous paragraph.

Right now, your essay reads in a rather linear fashion (which can be a pro in terms of clarity) but ideally, you also want to enhance a sense of interconnectedness between insights across texts.

For example, consider how Murakami’s message works in dialogue with Keyes’ cautionary tale about succumbing to the id.

Commented [JW38]: Try refraining from attaching broad value terms such as “positive” or “negative” to your argument – unpack for specificity. This notion of stasis is also clear in and of itself, so you could even consider cutting “negative” altogether here.

Commented [JW39]: Overall, really promising work Alyssa 😊 You have a sophisticated handle on how to craft argument across not only a paragraph, but across the body of an essay. Your analysis is generally watertight – just be careful to avoid more general terms, and always aim for specificity in your insights.

To further elevate your essay, consider how this could be made a uniting thread throughout all your points more explicitly – the fact that yearning seems to be an inextricable part of the condition of being. As a result, composers throughout Literary Mindscapes are exhibit various approaches to mediating the two states.

What is our existential takeaway?

Question: Through the sharing of stories we gain insight into the nature and power of emotional experiences

Dystopian stories expose readers to the realities of spiritual experiences through its representation of individual and collective occurrences. George Orwell's satirical prose novel 1984 (1948) depicts a society in which a totalitarian government suppresses psychological autonomy by manipulating various forms of mass media and subjugating its citizens through oppressive and dehumanising shared experiences. Orwell's novel also underlines the innate role of emotional intimacy to human nature through his representation of Winston and Julia's illicit relationship. The predetermined fate of the clones' lives in Mark Romanek's romantic tragedy film *Never Let Me Go* (2010) creates a society devoid of the inherently mortal emotions of optimism and aspiration, as they come to terms with their unavoidable destiny. By considering how our humanity is intricately linked with the capacity of our emotional experiences, storytellers give insight into the motivations of human behaviour when unduly influenced by a hostile collective.

In 1984, Orwell creates a society that seeks to psychologically repress its citizens, allowing readers to understand the personal and emotional impact of the loss of autonomy. Winston's totalitarian world emphasizes the power differential between the collective and the individual, exemplified through the compulsory period of Two Minutes Hate. The session is used by Party members to express their hatred towards enemies of the state, an activity which seized associates with an '...ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledgehammer...' Orwell employs violent imagery to explore the transformative power of this collective experience as they emotionally metamorphize into barbaric individuals. To combat the Party's rampant falsehoods, Winston begins to write his diary, which soon becomes a motif for the intrinsically human desire of self-expression. The diary is a means for Winston to evoke the 'interminable restless monologue that had been running inside his head, literally for years', with the hyperbolic description of his welled-up thoughts symbolic of the Party's assault on the freedom of speech. Before he writes, he illegally procures a pen from the black market as he feels that the 'beautiful creamy paper deserved to be written on with a real nib'. The pleasant connotations evoked by Orwell's visual imagery underlines how personal

Commented [JW40]: There are some promising elements to your thesis, but more faithful links could be made back to the question. This seems to be your call back to "nature and power of emotional experiences" however, spiritual and emotional can't necessarily be conflated without justification. Moreover, the term "realities" is non-specific and doesn't quite capture an argument on "power".

Consider how storytelling (especially through the vessel of the dystopic genre) allows composers to extol the power of emotional experiences to transform the individual and effect social change. To what extent might this insight be explored, yet tempered in each of your texts – 1984 especially?

Deleted: that s

Commented [JW41]: What is the relevance of this to emotional experiences?

Commented [JW42]: The lovers' relationship is an excellent place to turn for evidence with this question, but the link could be made much more explicit. So far, what is missing is engagement with the phrase "power of emotional experiences". Consider the following revision –

Orwell privileges the power of emotional experience as a means to assert autonomy within authoritarian regimes which stifle individualism.

You would then bring in Winston and Julia as your evidence within the body paragraph.

Here, note how there's a sense of cause -> effect, which is important for crafting any sort of argument.

Commented [JW43]: Great specificity! 😊

Commented [JW44]: As with your 1984 points above, argument is a little lacking here. You're providing some eloquent observations about emotional experiences ... [3]

Commented [JW45]: A really promising insight here – but the wording of the second half is a little unclear.

Commented [JW46]: With your topic sentence, aim to select stronger verbs to convey Orwell's purpose with greater force. Not only is Orwell creating/allowing, b ... [4]

Commented [JW47]: Here, you could add a development statement, with links to the particular context Orwell was engaging with – the early Cold War period in Britain was dictated by anxiety surrounding the rise of ... [5]

Deleted: b

Commented [JW48]: Excellent choice of evidence, considering its relevance to emotional experience, however your idea "power differential between the collective and the individual" isn't too clear. ... [6]

Commented [JW49]: Great point! You could also frame the act of writing as a symbol of resistance stemming from an outpouring of the individual's inner truth. This is systematically stifled by the Party's emotionally ... [7]

storytelling allows Winston to feel a certain emotional liberation. Whilst writing, Winston slips into a stream of consciousness style as he rants against Big Brother, stating *'they'll shoot me i dont care theyll shoot me in the back of the neck i dont care down with big brother.'* The assertive tone taken by Winston illustrates the spiritual empowerment of the individual achieved through his writing as he defies the ingrained fear and violence threatened by the collective.

Orwell's 1984 also allows readers to ascertain the significance of relationships and emotional intimacy to an individual's human experience. Winston and Julia's passionate but illicit relationship show how all people share a common impulse for physical and spiritual companionship. Orwell characterises Winston as *'... thirty-nine years old and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle...'*, with the ulcer symbolising Winston's psychological and sexual malnourishment. Throughout their romance, both partners feel invigorated and alive; on the first day of their meeting in the countryside, Winston walks through *'pools of gold wherever the boughs parted. Under the trees to the left of him the ground was misty with bluebells.'* Orwell employs sensory imagery to depict the rejuvenating effects of a spiritual affinity forbidden by the Party. As Julia and Winston consummate their relationship, Winston retrospectively remarks that *'Their embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act.'* The use of both war and sexual imagery demonstrates how, similar to the diary, intimate relationships empower individuals to challenge the repressive nature of the collective experience. To harness the emotions of its people, the Party subverts the immanent human instinct for companionship as an institutionalised *'duty to the Party'*, seeking to destroy private loyalties between individuals. After his release, Winston reflects on his betrayal of Julia in the Ministry of Love, decrying the *'things, your own acts, from which you could never recover. Something was killed in your breast; burnt out, cauterised out'*. The tricolon serves as a metaphor for the hollowness and loss Winston feels over the death of his emotional identity. Orwell's dystopia serves as a reminder of the personal significance of faithful relationships by crafting a story where the repressive, collective identity overwhelm the personal and the intimate.

Similarly, Romanek's dystopian film *Never Let Me Go* (2010) allows the viewer to gain insight into the donors' emotional struggles as they attempt to prove their humanity to a hostile

Commented [JW50]: Aim to lead with your driving idea at the start of each subpoint. This helps you remain within the language of argument rather than verging into retelling. You could also consider Winston's diary-writing as an act of personal storytelling (another link to the question) For example, consider rewording here:

Winston overcomes fear bred by Big Brother in his diary entry "quote". Drawing upon a visceral stream of consciousness style, Orwell portrays how personal storytelling may catalyse a spiritual empowerment of the individual, eroding the emotional influence of oppressive regimes.

Commented [JW51]: Overall, I think you could cover more scope with the paragraph, especially if its focus concerns how the Party powerfully manipulates the visceral emotions to gain compliance. Consider those points I touched on above (Thoughtcrime etc.) as additional material.

Transitioning to Winston's diary writing adds conceptual complexity to your point, and I find this your strongest quote. Your analysis above is quite slow-moving and could be much condensed in order to integrate more on the Big Brother fear premise.

Commented [JW52]: Your concluding statement has strayed slightly from your topic sentence. Try to align the two to keep your point cohesive.

Commented [JW53]: Aim to be more specific here. What exactly is the significance? Is it the power of emotions, such as love, to empower individual agency within political tyranny?

Commented [JW54]: Go further here to comment on significance re their totalitarian context. This would help bridge an additional link to "power".

Commented [JW55]: This is working fine, but I think you could consider an even stronger selection of evidence in Winston's initial visceral reaction to Julia at the beginning of the novel – one of perversion, barbarism and hate. If you traced the progression of that into romantic ... [8]

Commented [JW56]: Excellent choice of evidence. For your analysis, you could also consider how Orwell is drawing upon an extended metaphor of warfare to e ... [9]

Commented [JW57]: This statement is quite heavy on retelling.

Commented [JW58]: Some further contextualisation needed here – perhaps mention his torture.

Commented [JW59]: Your concluding statement offers much more specificity than your topic. Try aligning the two, and making clear from the outset what your stance is regarding the real tangible power of the individual's ... [10]

Deleted: Mark

Commented [JW60]: Keep your topic sentences conceptual – focus on insight into the human experience, with close focus on the question, rather than diving into text-specifics.

collective. Romanek presents this idea through the character arcs of the principle characters: Kathy, Ruth and Tommy. The film is shot as a flashback, with a 28-year-old Kathy H recounting the events of her life through a contemplative narration. The film cuts back to their days at Hailsham, presenting a montage of Kathy and Tommy's mutual experiences to depict their blooming friendship. At the Hailsham sale, Tommy buys a cassette for Kathy called *Songs After Dark*, and the extreme close-up shot of the tape emphasises its status as an important motif in the film. Kathy becomes enamoured with a song on the tape called *Never Let Me Go*; much like the glass paperweight in 1984, the song becomes symbolic of the desire for intimacy and ultimate frailty of human relationships. When Kathy listens to the song for the first time, the film emphasises her melancholic and reflective mindset through the low-key lighting which lightly silhouettes her facial expressions but shrouds the background in darkness. As Tommy begins a relationship with Ruth and they move to the Cottages, Romanek emphasises Kathy's psychological isolation through cross-cutting; whilst it shows the other residents paired up, she is always depicted as a solitary figure. In a revealing dialogue near the end of the film, Ruth apologises for keeping Kathy and Tommy apart, divulging that she started a relationship with Tommy as she *'didn't want to be the one that was left alone'*. Here, Romanek underlines how intimacy is innately human and a desire shared by all individuals. Romanek's romantic tragedy accentuates the impact of a shared affinity upon individuals, highlighting the instinct and necessity of interconnection.

Both George Orwell's *1984* and Mark Romanek's *Never Let Me Go* represent the psychological impact of living in worlds devoid of elements crucial to the human experience, such as free will and hope. Stories ultimately allow us to garner the timeless importance of emotional experiences and the universal themes they express.

Hey Edward! A good start, this is an essay with a lot of potential. You have a good handle on 1984's ideas particularly, and express your ideas eloquently on the whole. For your exam, consider being flexible with swapping out certain quotes/sub-points, depending on the extract's focus.

Commented [JW61]: A stronger argument could be made about the power of emotional experiences – perhaps the power of emotional experiences to humanise. Storytelling via film is a powerful tool through which Romanek positions us to empathise with these characters, and through his radical twist, thus question our previously held assumptions. Have a think about what these might be 😊

Commented [JW62]: This section is very heavy on retelling. Aim to contextualise the film in line with your argument in just 1 sentence, and get to your analysis as quickly as possible.

Commented [JW63]: Your writing lapses into retelling/explanation more so with the film than 1984 – I've left some further comments in my general feedback with advice on addressing this.

Commented [JW64]: I do think you've successfully traced this point, but what of the central concept of the principle characters being clones? The notion that they can feel so strongly despite this supposed "inhumanity" is the key idea.

Commented [JW65]: Your ideas are in the right direction, although a bit generally expressed here. The term "power of emotional experiences" could feature more strongly.

Deleted: By observing and challenging such social values, the storytellers invite us to evaluate the impact of these texts on us, as the audience.

Commented [JW66]: Perceptive link to storytelling to finish 😊

I've listed a couple of major areas for improvement below:

1. Linking to the question. The key terms of the question need to feature more explicitly throughout your essay – especially in your thesis, topic sentences and concluding sentences. Also try to integrate these terms into your analysis, wherever possible.
2. Structuring of your subpoints. At times, I'm seeing your writing verge into retelling/explanation. To address this, aim to stick to this kind of sub-point structure, which will also assist with concision:
 - Idea – leading with idea is really essential. Step back, considering your sub-point holistically and try to capture the essence of your quote in a short phrase.
 - Evidence (quote with contextualisation)
 - Technique and analysis in a second statement
3. Depth of analysis in Never Let Me Go. I'd like to see you dive further into the ideas of this text – especially the notion of questioning what it means to be human. One thing to consider is that the film adapts Kazuo Ishiguro's novel of the same name. Delving with your personal research into this source text could help you better grapple with the composer's purpose. The genre of the text is also significant – it is a fusion of science fiction/realism. Consider how genre is used as a unique vessel to convey this 21st insight on human experience.
4. Context. Some further acknowledgement of each text's context would help ground your arguments, and offer more explicit direction on each composer's intention. The focus should remain on insights into emotional experience's power (or alternatively, futility), but context can be used as a discerning supplementary tool.

Hi Ernest, overall, this is a very strong essay, so well done! :-)

You clearly have a very sophisticated understanding of Dobson's poetry, which is reflected in the strength of your analysis and insights. My main piece of feedback pertains to making sure that your connections to form are especially robust. Even though this might not be the focus of every question, form is a universal element that you can always talk about no matter the question to give your essay extra layering. In addition, there are some conceptual and contextual links that you could make more clearly in your Cock Crow paragraph.

Do you intend to write three or four body paragraphs in the actual exam? At the moment I would lean towards advising you to write three and preferentially select Young Girl at a Window, Summer's End and Cock Crow (but not necessarily in that order, which I discuss in my annotations.)

How does your text's form and features represent the impact of human experiences on individual lives?

Rosemary Dobson's confessional style of poetry illuminates the psychological struggles associated with experiences of change, impacting our lives as we gain a greater understanding of our ever-evolving identities and desires. Shaped by the rapid changes of the post-WWII period, Dobson delves into the complex anxieties associated with maturity in Young Girl at a Window. Dobson furthers her exploration of our emotions arising from the inevitability of change in Summer's End as we begin to reflect on our childhood through memory, and challenges our existing relationship with mortality in Over the Hill to illuminate the resilience associated with old age. Shifting to a more elegiac poetic style in her later poems, Dobson critiques the patriarchal paradigms associated with motherhood in Cock Crow, revealing the struggle between desire and responsibility. Dobson's unique poetry serves as a literary snapshot into ordinary, yet profound human moments within time that becomes intertwined with our exploration of our personal identities.

Commented [JW67]: This is a strong thesis statement – well done! You present a layered perspective, while very clearly articulating the key terms of the question.

Commented [JW68]: Rather than simply maturity, consider using the phrase "coming of age" which alludes to the essential thematic concern of the poem a little bit more accurately, and provides a more solid literary paradigm through which you can discuss "impact of human experiences."

Commented [JW69]: Careful here about amalgamating the experiences of the persona in the poem, directly with those of the reader. At the moment, a clearer positioning would be "Dobson reflects on childhood". Also, you could give this signposting statement a little bit more room to breathe by focusing on just this one poem in the sentence, rather than combining it with Over the Hill. It's not super clear how the thematic insights from the two poems currently complement each other.

Commented [JW70]: If you wanted to combine both poems within one. Signposting the statement, and you would need to make the thematic connection between both more clear. For example, is it that a consideration of both poems together offers us a continuum of experience from childhood to old-age? Try to articulate a specific impact on individual's life, connecting back to the question.

Commented [JW71]: It's great to see that you've made some strong links to form and features throughout!

In Young Girl at a Window, Dobson explores the complex anxieties within individuals faced with the experience of aging, asserting the need to embrace the inevitability of adulthood. Utilising the rigid poetic form of iambic tetrameter, Dobson explores the internal unease of the person met with 'mortal swords' that 'are crossed / On thresholds at the end of day;' In the transitory space between youth and adulthood symbolised by a 'threshold', violent imagery of blades reveals the heavy internal conflict within the **persona**. Dobson allegorically represents her own struggles with youth through the girl and delves further into the metaphysical landscape of the persona as she experiences 'The watchful room, the breathless light / Be hosts to you this final night.' The personification of the room highlights an acute anticipation of action, which is further enhanced by the assonance invoking a reflective tone as the persona becomes aware of the irreversibility of this juncture within her life. Contrasting against the violent nature of the first stanza, Dobson acknowledges **that** 'this the journey you must go / Through grass and sheaves and, lastly, snow.' Symbolised by the inevitable turning of seasons, Dobson foregrounds a sense of certainty in the cyclical movement between youth, adulthood and old age, yet, also metaphorically represents aging as a 'journey', emboldening us to also take this trip through time. Dobson ultimately reveals our complex anxieties from the experience of maturation, yet propels us into the exploration of one's life through **time**.

Commented [JW72]: A strong piece of analysis!

Commented [JW73]: Acknowledge here that this is the final stanza to demonstrate more awareness of progression being represented in the poetic form

Commented [JW74]: Great work on this paragraph! Some very eloquently worded and insightful analysis throughout. My main piece of feedback would just pertain to making sure the formal elements are centralised in your argument. For example, you could discuss how she borrows static elements of poetic tradition to communicate the importance of dynamic change within an individual human experience, which is an interesting contrast. Just an idea!

Commented [JW75]: We definitely need a more well defined development statement here where you are prioritising discussion of form.

Dobson then redefines our attitudes towards the inevitability of death in Over the Hill, encouraging an optimistic and confident outlook on life as old age becomes an act of resilience in overcoming hardship. **Shaped** by her rural Australian upbringing, Dobson depicts old age as a toil as a worker 'dredges home at dusk / with bluntly forward boots.' The iambic tetrameter accentuates the auditory imagery of the worker's footsteps approaching the end of life, symbolised by the coming of 'dusk'. Yet, Dobson reshapes our attitudes to death as the 'lit windows' of the worker's eyes take in 'the lemon-coloured light', Utilising the imagery of windows present within Young Girl at a Window, Dobson peers into a complex emotional landscape and spotlights the vitality and exuberance of the worker despite his old age, contrasting against the heaviness of the encroachment of **death**. Distilling a conversational and reflective tone through the blank **verse**, Dobson enhances the worker's carefree perspective on life as he is alluded

Commented [JW76]: This is a wonderful link, skilfully, done!

Commented [JW77]: This kind of discussion would be best suited at the beginning of the paragraph, so you can greater centralise how the blank verse is integral to the psychological exploration of the persona.

to the pastoral deity Apollo, where he ‘could move mountains if he cared’, but ‘he lets them lie’ and ‘quiets the trees’. The mythological allusion gives greater resonance to the ordinary workman’s experiences with death, elevating the significance of small yet profound moments in impacting individual lives. Thus, Dobson redefines the impact of mortality in shaping our emotional responses, presenting a nihilistic outlook towards the certainties of life.

Furthering her exploration of change impacting individual lives, Dobson’s *Summer’s End* reflects upon the complex emotions that arise from the inevitability of mortality, compelling us to relive the past through memory. Opening with summer imagery, Dobson juxtaposes the soft sibilance of the ‘spotted scarves’ and ‘sunshades’ with the harsh plosives of waves that ‘curl’ and ‘crash to the tramline.’, illustrating the temporality of childhood joy against the relentless flow of time symbolised by waves. Dobson furthers the inevitable passing of childhood as she depicts “the lonely mermaid” that “weeps at the edge of the water”. Alluding to the story of ‘The Little Mermaid’ by Andersen, the mermaid becomes a symbol of transition in her half-fish and half-human state, emphasising the fantastical experiences of childhood that are left to remain as stories against time. Then, through the diptych structure of her poem, Dobson shifts in seasonal imagery moving into adulthood, contrasting water with ‘fire’ and ‘smoke’ that ‘was bitter, contesting / With the crossed blades of sunlight’. Here, Dobson contrasts the olfactory imagery of bitter smoke against the returning motif of blades used in *Young Girl At A Window*, heightening the psychological struggle as time inhibits the lingering desire to return to childhood. Yet, memories serve to transcend temporal restrictions as the persona, ‘Dreaming by the fire,’ watches ‘For a child to run back through Time’. The returning motif of fire evokes a passionate and intense spiritual nature of connection as we converse with our childhood through memory. Through the diptych form of *Summer’s End*, Dobson offers a poignant reflection on our past and our complex relationships with time and childhood through memory.

In ‘*Cock Crow*’, Dobson’s confessional poetry enables insight into the psychological struggle between domestic roles and the desire for creative expression. Dobson uses the rigidity of 5 quatrain stanzas to represent a sense of constraint within the persona, where the caesura marked by the comma in “Wanting to be myself, alone”

Commented [JW78]: The term nihilistic imparts a very different impression to the central argument, which you’re conveying. I feel like this paragraph has a fundamentally, hopeful outlook – exploring the idea that although death is inevitable, a sense of permeating optimism is prioritised. Nihilism, however, suggests a sense of numb resignation. Perhaps reconsider the usage of this term for consistency!

Commented [JW79]: I like this very much as a potential, central thesis – the notion that change is the only certainty within an individuals’ ever evolving, complex, human experience. I feel like this could come out a little stronger in your introduction/thesis

Commented [JW80]: With Dobson’s poetry, I feel like a strong approach would be tracing a chronological human experience. At the moment, you jump around a little bit with the chronology, starting from a coming-of-age experience, then arriving at confronting mortality, and then finishing with the experience of motherhood. You could consider rearranging the order of your poems so that *Cock Crow* comes second and your mortality poems come last to preserve that sense of chronology.

Commented [JW81]: Well done! This is a beautiful piece of analysis where you insightfully link together oral techniques with more concrete ideas. I would just comment on how this is an allegorical illustration in order to slip in an extra technique. For example “allegorically, capturing the temporality of childhood etc.”

Commented [JW82]: Another skilful link, nicely done!

Commented [JW83]: It’s great that you’ve arrived on a stronger discussion of form towards the end here, but I would like to see you start equally strong. Throughout your paragraphs so far, I’m noticing a trend where the development statement is sometimes absent/morphed in with your first sub point. Try to make it a distinct statement that stands on its own and use the space to present a foundational argument about how the unique element of form within each poem best highlights Dobson’s conceptual exploration.

Commented [JW84]: Great – but perhaps confessional style of poetry?

Commented [JW85]: This is the start of a potentially very sophisticated insight link in context and form, so let it stand on its own, rather than jumping straight into quoting.

Commented [JW86]: Here’s an important element of context to consider for your argument. The influence of second wave feminism and the sustained critique of the ‘domestic containment’ narrative is evident in the poem’s focus on the struggle between societal expectations of familial responsibility and a woman’s desire for personal autonomy and creative freedom. You could more explicitly acknowledge how the rigidity of the form captures the persona’s psychological struggle within this domestic containment narrative, (which was a product of the American government.)

establishes how her desire for identity can only be fostered through solitary moments. Yet, similar to Young Girl at a Window, the persona becomes trapped within a liminal space “Between the lit house and the town...”. Dobson’s use of setting, symbolic of domestic responsibility and creative expression, externalises the persona’s struggle as she becomes bounded by two opposing forces. Dobson critiques patriarchal norms that bind women to domestic roles, revealing a comfort in isolation as the persona finds solace where ‘the dark trees closed me round / The night absolved me of my bonds.’ Dobson symbolises night as a sanctuary of freedom, juxtaposing the imagery of the ‘lit house’, symbolic of maternal responsibility, that achieves a similar dichotomy used in Summer’s End. Yet, Dobson frames the night as illusory, as the persona hears ‘the cock crow on the hill’ three times, ‘And turned the handle of the door.’ Dobson alludes to the Denial of Peter, confronting the persona’s act of freedom as a betrayal of her family. By utilising iambic tetrameter throughout the poem, Dobson reinforces the instability of the persona’s decisions, illuminating the everlasting forces that compel the unresolved conflict between our distinct identities. Through Cock Crow, Dobson ultimately presents the struggle between responsibility and desire constructed by patriarchal norms.

Rosemary Dobson’s poetry reveals the significance of our experiences associated with change and contrasting desires, presenting simple, yet profound moments in time in Young Girl at a Window, Over the Hill/Summer’s End, and Cock Crow. Through her resounding poetry, we begin to reflect on the impact of our experience in shaping our unique ever-changing identities in the relentless flow of time.

Commented [JW87]: Since the dichotomy is conceptually quite different, I would recommend giving this comparison more space for elaboration by using a separate sentence. You can use it as a springboard to talk about how, although the thematic dichotomies may be divergent throughout life, the mere fact of having opposing forces which pull us in different directions is an unchanging fact of the individual human experience.

Commented [JW88]: How does iambic tetrameter contribute to reinforcing the instability of the persona’s decisions? The logical connection is not very clear to me here.

Commented [JW89]: There is a strong sense of isolation permeating throughout this poem, and I think you could acknowledge how Dobson explores isolation as a tool for the creative person to further layer this argument.

Also, I think you could explore in greater detail the idea about how contextual constraints, such as patriarchal conventions, and the expectations of maternity can restrict feminine self actualisation.

Commented [JW90]: Do you intend to select one of these two poems to potentially write about depending on the question? In my opinion, Summer’s End is much stronger than Over the Hill, and is the one I would preferentially, lean towards :-)